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Prospects: An Original TV Pilot

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Syracuse University

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Prospects: An Original Pilot

Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

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Candidate for Bachelor of Arts Degree
and Renée Crown University Honors
May 2013

Honors Capstone Project in Television, Radio, & Film

Capstone Project Advisor: _____
Geri Clark, Professor of Drama

Capstone Project Reader: _____
Tom Seeley, Professor of TRF

Honors Director: _____
Stephen Kuusisto, Director

Date: May 6, 2013

Abstract

My capstone project is a television pilot script about the trials and tribulations of a minor league baseball team's front office. Following around the new general manager and his various colleagues and colorful characters around the ballpark, the show, tentatively titled *Prospects*, is meant to be optimistic and warm-hearted, but still with a bite of humor and cynicism.

For the composition of this piece, I initially used the free screenwriting software Celtx, as well as your standard tools of writing: pad and pen.

My goal for this project was to create a quality ensemble-driven show that, while centered around the running of a baseball team, was not just about baseball. All successful television shows, I've learned, center around the relationships between well-developed, lifelike characters. Thus I also mined material from my own life in an attempt to give the characters this lifelike air, using my own experiences to try and give the show more universal appeal, beyond just fans of baseball. The show wound up being an hour-long dramedy, with moments of comedy as well as plot points with a more serious tone.

Through this experience, I was able to learn about the finer aspects of television pilot writing, as well as how to tailor my work towards a larger market, which would make it more appealing to networks and production companies. My skills were also sharpened through the outlining, writing, editing, and re-writing processes.

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Reflection

In my 22 years of living, there have been two constant loves of mine: writing and baseball. Both have offered me escape, entertainment, and a means of self-expression that I could not find with anything else. As I grew older (and realized I would never be a professional baseball player), I became more and more committed to writing as a trade and baseball became a joyful hobby. However, the capstone has been a wonderful opportunity to combine these two passions, by writing a television script about the game I love.

Prospects is an original TV pilot about the trials and tribulations of a single-A minor league baseball team in a small town--the Woodley Valley Jethawks. The series follows Jack Fenton, the young assistant GM who is thrust reluctantly into the role of General Manager. Surrounding him is an ensemble cast of colorful characters: groundskeepers, players, local reporters, grizzled coaches, strangely dedicated season ticket holders, and a cavalcade of others. Jack must struggle to return the Jethawks to relevance, as attendance has plummeted over the past few seasons.

He works with his public relations man, Scott, and his new field manager, to rebuild the team's presence in the town. Meanwhile Pedro, a fresh prospect player from the Dominican Republic, arrives to play for the team--but cannot speak English and has no interpreter. As in other pilots, many characters are introduced with long-term story arcs as well as smaller plots that are contained within the episode.

I envision a season-long story that's based on my experiences with my own hometown minor league team, the Vermont Lake Monsters. The Monsters play in a very old ballpark that was actually condemned by the city a few years ago, and an ongoing legal dispute over who would foot the costs of renovation nearly led to the team moving away--an intriguing opportunity to take a closer look at the role of professional sports teams within the community as a social institution.

Stylistically, I consider *Prospects* to be a "dramedy" in the vein of shows like *The West Wing*, *What About Brian*, *Northern Exposure*, and others. My writing neither trends significantly towards serious drama or comedy--I prefer a lighthearted mix of both. Jokes are especially funny in a drama because humor is unexpected in that medium, and all comedy is based somewhat on the element of surprise. *Prospects* would technically be a drama, because it runs an hour long, but I established a somewhat comedic tone in the pilot that I would hope to maintain in future episodes.

The pilot also differs from traditional television scripts because the scenes are individually much longer and there are fewer overall. Most teleplays now have a lot of brief scenes that move the plot along quickly. My experience and beginnings as a playwright can be seen in this script, because in some ways the script does flow a bit like a play.

Though the series is about a baseball team, I was advised by many industry professionals to make sure the stories are not baseball-centric. The sport is a major component, but I sought to add human elements--relationship stories,

romance, and other possibilities--so that anyone could enjoy these characters even if they weren't fans of baseball.

Making it a baseball show would have limited the market for the script and would make it more difficult to pitch around the industry, one of my goals for the continuation of this project. One of the advantages of the capstone is that this particular initiative will hopefully give me an advantage in the writing job market--original pilots are a standard aspect of getting a television job in New York or Los Angeles. One of my influences, writer/producer Matthew Weiner, famously got a job on *The Sopranos* over a decade ago by giving series creator David Chase a writing sample called *Mad Men*.

Most of my heavy influences are writers that indulge in quick-paced witty banter and write hyper-articulate, intelligent characters with a knack for impromptu speechmaking. My greatest hero is Aaron Sorkin, and has been since I was a child, when my parents made me watch *The West Wing* when I was far too young to understand what was happening in the story.

I really enjoyed the idea of really smart characters displaying genuine Frank Capra-esque love for one another, while still dealing with big stakes and drama. I am a fan of all of his work, from *A Few Good Men* to *The Social Network* and *The Newsroom*. Sorkin's work always has great artistic meaning and seeks to make commentary on our society, something that I have always strived to achieve with my own work.

I feel as though *Prospects* presents the opportunity to discuss and comment on some important themes that are close to me. F. Scott Fitzgerald

wrote that “you don’t write because you want to say something, you write because you have something to say.” I subscribe to this belief, and I think Prospects has allowed me to say the things I want to say.

Amy Sherman-Palladino, creator of the hit show *Gilmore Girls*, is another writer whose style I admire. Her lightning-fast dialogue and myriad pop-culture references are facets that I have tried to incorporate into my own writing. She has an excellent sense of story and an even better sense of how to develop unique and interesting characters. Though *Gilmore Girls* was not necessarily tailored towards my demographic, I enjoyed it nonetheless. Her ability to make a potentially niche concept have universal appeal is another element I hoped to add into the creation of Prospects. Other writers I have admired and sought to emulate over the years include William Goldman, Beau Willimon, David Simon, Carl Reiner, and Paddy Chayefsky.

Even though Prospects as a concept does not seem to be dripping with artistic significance and important social themes, I believe it can be an avenue for discussing certain important issues. Most of my favorite writers are distinctly American and distinctly interested in the plight of our society: David Mamet, Arthur Miller, Clifford Odets, Sam Shepard.

In outlining my story, I created an ensemble cast that had many different characters with great opportunities for interesting plots. For inspiration, I drew from successful ensemble television shows like *Friday Night Lights* and *The Wire*--I'm impressed by how those two particular programs can keep track of so many characters while still maintaining the attention of the audience.

Thematically, I felt that minor league baseball was a wonderful backdrop to discuss the nature of fame in today's America. Every year, thousands of young men hit baseball diamonds across the United States, South America, and Central America with the singular dream of making it to the big leagues. Most of them won't get there; but millions of fans turn out to watch them try.

I love the romance of baseball--the timeless nature of the game, literally, due to its lack of clock. The pastoral style of it, how it has remained a constant throughout good days and bad in our nation. It is a distinctly American cultural facet, full of heart and a charming quixotic streak, especially in the minor leagues. It is a game based around failure--one is considered excellent at his job if he's able to get a hit only thirty percent of the time. The dogged pursuit of self-improvement and eventual happiness juxtaposed with the whimsical nature of a minor league park is an interesting concept.

Most of the characters in the series have "almost" made it and have fallen just short of their dream--the manager, Bruce McKittrick, a former major leaguer who only got to play a few games, the players, Jack Fenton, who hasn't quite made it to a major league front office. This is a theme I'd like to follow throughout the series, a similar heartwarming mood evoked by shows like *The Office* and *Parks and Recreation*.

This idea for a TV show has been a thought in the back of my mind for quite awhile--I have always wanted to write about baseball, and much of my inspiration for *Prospects* stemmed from my experiences as a kid in Vermont, seeing the Lake Monsters play in my hometown.

The Lake Monsters are mostly college kids, low-level draftees with little chance of actually making it to the majors. The quality of play is pretty terrible and the stadium is old, cramped, and dilapidated. However, on a beautiful afternoon when the sun is shining and you have a hot dog in your hand, it just does not matter. It is wonderful regardless. That feeling of optimism and carefree joy is something that would, I think, be accepted enthusiastically by television audiences.

Once I settled on this as my Capstone project, I started attending some Lake Monsters games while at home to re-acquaint myself with those feelings I had as a child, and also began doing my research on the ins and outs of working for a minor league club on a day-to-day basis.

It further solidified my belief that this would be a compelling subject for a television script. Ideas for possible episodes were jumping out at me everywhere as I walked around the stadium and studied the wide variety of people in attendance--the fans, the vendors, the mascots, the cheerleaders, visiting Little League teams, the grounds crew.

Luckily for me, there are also stacks upon stacks of volumes written on the subject of the minor leagues, from a variety of different perspectives. From former players to former executives, it seems as though almost everyone has written a book about their experiences in the minors. There's a plethora of wonderful anecdotes as well as useful information on the business of running a team.

Most importantly, I learned that the role of the front office is not really related to baseball strategy in most respects--it is primarily concerned with the fan experience. Thus minor league baseball executives deal with promotions, between-inning entertainment (ranging from magicians to children racing dressed as hot dogs), managing the field and the fans. It leads to a hectic workday that's never, ever routine.

My next step was to sketch out some rudimentary characters. A reluctant GM who's not really satisfied with his job or place in life makes for an interesting anti-hero, and that archetype became Assistant GM Jack Fenton. I created a small staff around him, and a few players to get the team involved with the story.

I was most interested in what it would be like as a young man from a poor Latin American country trying to make it in America without familiarity with the language or culture. Thus I created Pedro Ramirez, a baseball player from the Dominican Republic and a newcomer to the United States, who joins the Jethawks in the pilot but is alone in a foreign land.

Character breakdowns now complete, I set about creating a formal outline for the episode with A, B, and C stories for different characters that introduced them adequately and gave them some solid character development. This kind of outline is a specific scene-by-scene layout planning a few bits of dialogue as well as the goals of the characters involved in each moment.

I then wrote a very rough draft of about 41 pages and sent it for review to my Honors Advisor, Gerardine Clark. The editing and rewriting process helped better elucidate my themes and gain greater understanding of what it was I really

wanted to say. I wanted to greater emphasize the quixotic nature of the characters and the setting, make it more romantic and also more comical at the same time.

I also spent a semester studying in Los Angeles, and was able to get feedback on the script from industry professionals. I interned for a company that managed television writers, and my colleagues at work made some excellent suggestions and also helped me iron out a real pitch, making this project even more practical.

They added thoughts about keeping the stories away from baseball and ensuring the plots were character-driven and not sports-driven. This would widen the appeal to a much larger demographic. Even though it was important to make my script artistically valuable, Hollywood also has a bottom-line mentality, and my time in Los Angeles helped me better understand how to marry the two schools of thought without compromising one or the other.

After notes and suggestions from my Honors Reader, Tom Sealey, as well as Professor Clark, I did a second rewrite which I was very satisfied with. Although one is never truly finished with rewrites, I felt this version captured what I wanted to express. I added more obstacles to heighten the drama, and ironed out some passages that felt clunky or forced. The balance of social commentary and entertainment value reached an equilibrium which I found palatable. It was a tricky but very rewarded process getting to this point, one that took almost two years of research, brainstorming, writing, editing, and rewriting.

This style of show with its elements of comedy as well as serious beats would fit best with a younger, educated crowd. Obviously, I attempted to create a

show that could capture a broad audience, but my chief aim would be to bring in the coveted 18-25 demographic, mostly males. The pilot's greatest challenge is to go beyond fans of baseball and entertain a variety of groups.

In today's television landscape, when ratings are becoming more and more stratified and programming becomes niche-prone, it's difficult to amass a truly diverse following. There are hundreds of channels and other alternative means for distributing content now thanks to broadband internet access, so a show of this nature faces a great deal of obstacles. If given a fair shake, this concept could find an audience fairly easily.

The success of this project certainly cannot be accredited to me alone. Everyone who has helped improve my writing over the years has contributed to this initiative, and I am grateful to all of them. My father was the first to teach me how to write as a young child, when I started typing short stories on an old typewriter. He enlightened me on the basic rules of good language, what words "pop" more than others, how to really make a sentence strike the reader. Numerous teachers and professors over the years also helped me shape my own style--my high school drama teacher, who first let me put on my own original plays and helped foster my newfound passion for dramatic writing.

At Syracuse University, Gerardine Clark's playwriting class in the Honors Program allowed me to get a play produced at Syracuse Stage, which led to three more of my plays getting produced through the College of Visual & Performing Arts. Her wisdom and insight were invaluable for this project as well as many other pieces that I have written over the years.

Timothy Davis-Reed, a professor of drama in VPA also provided excellent input on this script. As a former film and television actor, he was able to give me added perspective from an actor, how best to write out moments so that they can be comprehensive to those who must bring the work to life. As a mentor and friend, this process would not have been as rewarding or successful without his involvement.

Professor Tom Seeley in the Television, Radio, and Film department at Newhouse was indispensable for his advice on TV writing and how to go through the process of creating an original pilot in the most efficient and results-oriented means possible. He showed me how to make a quality script outline and then gave excellent notes on how to revise and expand the pilot.

I'm grateful to authors Dirk Hayhurst and Mike Shannon, impeccable sources of literary material through which I was able to greater understand the life of a minor league baseball player and learn about some of the challenges they face. Their works are hilarious and endlessly entertaining, in addition to being very informative.

I must also extend thanks to the Syracuse Chiefs for allowing me to spend a day in their front office and giving me some hands-on experience with the inner workings of a minor league baseball team. Their generosity gave me a visceral connection to the front office characters, which made a noticeable difference in the quality of *Prospects*.

Finally, the staff at the Renee Crown Honors Program was eminently helpful in seeing this project through to its conclusion, despite hiccups,

scheduling issues, and various other accommodations along the way. Their commitment to my passion and my ideas was just about equal to my own, and I am grateful for their assistance on this sizable and at times intimidating undertaking.

After living with *Prospects* for almost two years, I've become deeply connected with all of the characters as I added more of myself into their fictional lives. My passions for both writing and America's Pastime increased exponentially as I delved deeper into both and came away with even greater appreciation for them. This project represents so much of who I am as both a writer and a person, and I am immensely proud of how far I have advanced in my chosen field over the past four years.

This script is also fiercely patriotic, and to me it represents my own love letter to the United States of America and what this nation means to me.

For all of our country's warts and darker, more sinister aspects, I see this project as a reflection of how I see this nation and where I see us going. The symbol of the unfinished pyramid on the back of the dollar bill, as we constantly try to build on and improve on what we've created is a source of great inspiration. We are not perfect, but the sense that our work is never finished, that we can always do better and reach greater heights is something that I sought to incorporate into *Prospects* on some level.

I believe that the minor leagues are an excellent reflection of who we are as a society, which is why I felt that using baseball as a conduit to discuss the

important issues of this country at the present time was simply a wonderful creative match.

It's been 22 years, and as my love of both writing and baseball continue to grow, I will remember this project as an incredibly rewarding experience, and hopefully the source of some professional success.

Summary

As an aspiring television writer, screenwriter, and playwright, my aim with the Honors Capstone project was to produce an industry-standard television pilot that could help hone my writing skills and also act as a solid writing sample which can be used to help me enter the highly competitive entertainment workforce. A “pilot” script is the opening episode of a potential TV show, which can be sold as a concept to networks and production companies. I decided to write a script about the front office of a minor league baseball team similar to the one that I grew up watching in my home town. There’s a lot of appeal to the potential storytelling options in such a setting--there’s so much more to the minor leagues than the sport itself.

Lots of colorful characters, fun anecdotes, and interesting plotlines abound in reality, so creating fictional ones was equally entertaining. For added human elements, I was able to draw from my own life experience in order to make these characters seem real, and allow for a reader to more closely identify with them, despite the fact that a reader might not have any interest or knowledge of minor league baseball.

My capstone required deeper study into the process and format of television writing, which I partook in with my Honors advisor, Gerardine Clark, and my Honors reader, Tom Seeley. They were able to provide a lot of insight and wisdom on the outlining, drafting, and rewriting tasks. While I was engaged in the Semester in Los Angeles through Syracuse, I was able to get additional feedback from more people in the industry, who had some excellent advice on how to

market the script. Coming up with a logline (an industry term for a one sentence summary of a concept) and an angle on how to pitch the idea was helpful.

One of the issues with my particular idea is that baseball is now considered more of a niche sport--at least when it comes to Hollywood. In discussions with my colleagues and bosses in Los Angeles, it was recommended to me that I make the story more character-based, and not centered around baseball itself. In addition, when trying to pitch the script to industry professionals in the future, I should also emphasize that the story is not one that is accessible only to baseball fans; you don't need to be an aficionado in order to enjoy the show and its colorful characters.

Most television scripts are not sold on the script itself, but rather through a pitch to an executive that can be as short as thirty seconds or run for hours. Regardless of time allotted, the pilot's creator must be prepared to enthusiastically "sell" the idea--briefly telling the story, outlining the characters, in essence summarize the entire concept in an engaging, interesting way that excites the person that one is pitching to.

It's a skill set entirely different from writing, but an important aspect of becoming a successful television writer or screenwriter. After living with these characters and this story for so long, I feel confident that I can pitch this idea and this story to a producer with passion and articulation--abilities that I learned through the creation of this capstone project.

I also learned that, though the television business previously was more interested in reading spec scripts--a teleplay for an episode of a current television

show--now more and more producers and networks are interested in reading original pilots instead. Thus, my choice to write a pilot script as a capstone will hopefully aid my as I move into the professional field.

My main character, Jack Fenton, is the Assistant General Manager of the single-A level Woodley Valley Jethawks. He is reluctantly thrust into the role of General Manager after the previous GM has an on-field altercation with the mascot and an umpire. Saddled with a failing team and a minor scandal in the wake of the brawl, Jack has to find ways to make the Jethawks popular again.

There are other ancillary characters as well, with smaller story arcs: his awkward, bookish second-in-command, a down-on-his-luck ex-player-turned-manager, a new player from the Dominican Republic who's thousands of miles from home and can't speak a lick of English. A cast that's more about the ensemble than any single character creates a lot of great potential for storytelling, and makes it less likely that a concept will go stale after only a few episodes.

This type of plot accomplishes two things: it introduces an interesting short-term storyline, while still leaving room later for a clear season-long story arc. It is important to have both of these aspects in a successful pilot script, as you want the reader to feel satisfied by the conclusion of the plot, but also curious about what happens next with the characters and the long-term arc.

The process before the actual writing of the script was a long one. The old adage is "write what you know," and since I had no previous experience working in baseball (except as a fan of the sport), a great deal of research was necessary in order to create a truly authentic piece. I also drew on my own memories as a fan,

growing up in Vermont and watching the short-season single-A Vermont Lake Monsters play. After extensive reading and face-to-face discussions with people who work in minor league baseball, I created an outline of an idea.

In television, I learned that an outline is a very specific plan for the plot of the show, rather than just a brief abstract. Each scene receives a brief summary on what occurs. Once the outline is completed, the actual writing aspect becomes much simpler. Most scripted TV show writing rooms require an outline for an episode for the head writer's approval, before the staffer is allowed to go home and write. This was a skill I was unaccustomed to--it turned out that a major portion of my project was learning the professional process for writing a television script, which is definitely a change from what I was used to as a writer.

My previous dramatic writing experience was mostly in theatre, where the writer has more creative control as well as freedom, in terms of story, form, and process. Television and film have a much different style and are also more rigid in structure and protocol. The pressure of having content to air every week necessitates these procedures. Though writing can sometimes be a lonely task, in television it is oftentimes a team effort, which is a very different way of working.

This project encompassed several different areas of the writing procedure--from the initial brainstorming to extensive research and study, all the way through to outlining and the writing itself, as well as strategies for pitching and marketing my concept in a comprehensive way. There is a lot more that goes into the creation of a television pilot script than just the script itself.

However, I now feel much more prepared to meet the challenges in the industry now that this project has been seen through to completion. The lessons I learned beyond writing, lessons about the business and how best to navigate it, will be invaluable as I begin my career and try to establish myself in such a fickle and byzantine field.

PROSPECTS
"Pilot"

By

Kevin Slack

May 5th, 2013

Kevin Slack
322 Ostrom Avenue Apartment #9
Syracuse, NY 13210

FROM BLACK:

JACK

(VO)

America, like baseball, is
literally timeless.

FADE IN:

INT. MCCLUSKEY'S PUB -- NIGHT

Images that one would see in a classic old-school sports bar. The Babe. Lou Gehrig. Ty Cobb glaring at a pitcher. An old, worn-out glove sitting on a mahogany shelf. Faded team photos and pennants. Autographs. We see all this as JACK continues to speak.

JACK

We've been playing the game for over 150 years, and it's still 90 feet to first, 60 feet 6 inches to the pitcher's mound, 3 outs in an inning, and 9 innings in a game. Other sports have clocks and time-outs and stoppage time, time time time. But baseball can, in theory, go on forever. You can be down to your final out and losing by fifteen runs, and there's still the slightest, most infinitesimal glimmer of hope. Baseball defeats that one thing we all fear, that one thing that is seemingly insurmountable to kings and peasants alike: the passage of time.

A glass of bourbon with ice slowly melting is lifted to Jack's mouth. He sips at it.

JACK (cont'd)

The United States has lit the globe for two centuries, never ceasing, never abandoning our way of life, through strife and turmoil, peace and prosperity, two world wars and every cultural revolution between here and Haight-Ashbury. Yet the Fourth of July, hot dogs, the mailman, just like baseball--

(CONTINUED)

CHARLIZE

So are you like, a baseball player?

We now see JACK FENTON, late twenties and handsome in a bookish, diet-Kennedy way, is talking to CHARLIZE, a stunningly gorgeous woman down the bar. They're the only two customers in the place. You never see a woman like this alone when you go out. And yet, she's clearly enraptured by his speech.

JACK

Not exactly.

Charlize's bedroom eyes dim. Interest fading.

CHARLIZE

Oh.

JACK

I work across the street.

CHARLIZE

Oh, the the Woodley Valley
Lightning Sparrows?

JACK

...the Woodley Valley JetHawks, but
yeah.

CHARLIZE

So you are a baseball player!

JACK

Not exactly.

CHARLIZE

But that's a baseball course across
the street.

JACK

Yes, it's a baseball...field. A
Single-A professional
baseball...field.

CHARLIZE

So what do you do there, then?

JACK

I'm the General Manager.

(beat.)

Well, Assistant General Manager,
but pretty much the same thing.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLIZE

And what does that mean, exactly.

JACK

Well, I help manage the organization.

CHARLIZE

And what does that mean.

JACK

It means--really? It means I oversee the...the team, the field, the concessions, the souvenirs, the advertising...I run the team.

CHARLIZE

Do you know some of the players?

JACK

Yes.

CHARLIZE

(getting excited)

Are you allowed to like, talk to them and stuff?

JACK

Yeah--yes, of course--they work for me.

CHARLIZE

Wow, dude, you don't have to get all--

JACK

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. It's been a tough week. And we got off to a tough start. I'm Jack.

CHARLIZE

Charlize.

JACK

Hi, Charlize.

CHARLIZE

(looking out the windows at the illuminated stadium across the street)

It kind of looks like there's a game on right now, shouldn't you be at work?

(CONTINUED)

JACK
There is a game going on.

CHARLIZE
And why aren't you there?

JACK
Because I'm not a masochist.

CHARLIZE
I don't know what that word means.

JACK
I know.

CHARLIZE
(beat.)
So you work there. But you're not a
baseball player.

JACK
Yes.

CHARLIZE
So what does that mean, exactly?

JACK
Okay, look lady--

Suddenly an old man, CLYDE, 60s, his face a leathery map of
the world, bursts through the door. He wears Dickie's jeans
and a faded blue button-down.

CLYDE
Mr. Fenton!

JACK
Yeah?

CLYDE
You'd better get back across the
street.

JACK
Why?

CLYDE
It's an emergency.

JACK
Clyde, it's minor league baseball,
it's not an emergency unless Jeremy
Jethawk is getting beaten up by the
home plate umpire.

(CONTINUED)

Clyde just gives him a silent look.

JACK (cont'd)
Oh come on, really?

CLYDE
The police might call in K-9 units.

CHARLIZE
What's going on?

JACK
I have to go.

Jack gets up, throws some money on the bar, and dashes to the door, leaving Charlize thoroughly confused.

He stops, turns around and runs back and puts his business card in her hand. He speaks rapid-fire.

JACK (cont'd)
But you were thoroughly charming
and we had a special connection
tonight and here's my card so
if you'd like to get a drink
sometime you should--

CLYDE
Mr. Fenton!

JACK
All right! All right!

Jack exits with Clyde right behind.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

Clyde and Jack walk briskly across the street and through the front gates of dismal JETHAWK STADIUM, under a banner that shouts FLY, JETHAWKS, FLY! The roar of the crowd grows as they approach--it's not the sound of a crowd watching baseball, either.

JACK
What the hell happened?

CLYDE
I don't know, Mr. Fenton, I didn't
see it.

(CONTINUED)

JACK

Someone else couldn't have handled this?

CLYDE

Who else?

JACK

I don't--Literally anyone else, Clyde. I was doing really well with Charlize in there.

CLYDE

No you weren't.

JACK

Yes I--how do you know?

CLYDE

Because I know.

JACK

I was doing well. It was my A-game.

CLYDE

You were doing "America Like Baseball Is Literally Timeless," right?

JACK

I was.

CLYDE

You weren't doing well.

JACK

How do you know?

CLYDE

I know.

JACK

How?

CLYDE

Has it ever worked once, Mr. Fenton?

JACK

Well--

(CONTINUED)

CLYDE

Once?

JACK

(beat)

It's a work in progress.

CLYDE

Okay.

JACK

Let's not talk about this anymore.

CLYDE

Whatever you say.

They're coming through the concourse now, and are about to step into the stands.

JACK

Yes whatever I say, Clyde, because I am your superior. I'm your commanding officer. If this were a war, you'd be bound by the, I don't know, the code of whatever to--

He stops dead as they step into the stands and see the fracas on the field.

JACK (cont'd)

Oh God.

CLYDE

Yeah.

CUT TO:

EXT. JETHAWK STADIUM -- NIGHT

A GIANT FEATHERY BLUE HAWK MASCOT with a jetpack on its back is wrestling on the ground with mid-50s paunchy manager MANNY MARTINO, the HOME PLATE UMPIRE, and TERRY O'DWYER, the late-40s General Manager of the Jethawks who looks like he came direct from central casting for a used-car salesman.

Terry PULLS JEREMY JETHAWK off of Manny and punches him in the beak, and the Jethawk's head flies off revealing a teenager's head underneath. The crowd gasps and kids scream as their childhoods and collective innocence are destroyed. As Jeremy Jethawk rolls on the ground, Terry is tackled again by the home plate umpire and Manny also piles on.

Jack is deadpan.

(CONTINUED)

JACK
I guess I have to go stop this,
huh.

CLYDE
Yes sir.

JACK
And this would be the point where I
can make a joke about not getting
paid enough for this job.

CLYDE
Or how you wish you had listened to
your mother and become a doctor.

JACK
Yeah.

CLYDE
Prime opportunity.

JACK
(beat)
I got nothing.

CLYDE
Me either.

JACK
All right. I'm gonna go out there
now. Yeah.

CLYDE
I'm with you in spirit.

JACK
Thanks, Clyde.
(beat.)
Living the dream.

And with that he leaps over the rail and onto the grass and
we--

SMASH CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. TRAINER'S ROOM -- LATER

CARL, the Jethawks' athletic trainer, slaps a bag of ice onto Jack's slightly swollen face. He's taken a bit of a beating. Jack winces and holds the ice to his eye.

CARL

I should see the other guy, right?
He's in the hospital?

Jack sighs and stands up from the training table.

JACK

Something like that. Thanks, Carl.

CARL

Hey, pretty exciting night, I
enjoyed the show.

JACK

Yeah, me too.

He walks out of the training room and into--

CUT TO:

INT. CLUBHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

The Jethawks' clubhouse. Ballplayers in various stages of undress chatter and change into their street clothes. There's a lot of laughing and chatter.

JOSH REINER, a Jethawk pitcher, is buttoning his shirt as Jack passes.

JOSH

Lookin' sharp, Fenton.

JACK

You know I could have you traded to
the Texas League and just make up a
reason why, right?

JOSH

Maybe now you'll be able to get
some ladies with a shiner like
that, huh?

JACK

I do whatever it takes, Reiner.

(CONTINUED)

JOSH

Hey--

Josh turns serious and draws closer.

JACK

I don't know what's gonna happen,
Josh.

JOSH

Now what makes you think I was
gonna ask about what's gonna
happen?

JACK

I'm sorry, what were you gonna ask?

JOSH

(beat)

I was gonna ask what's gonna
happen.

JACK

I don't know, Josh.

JOSH

Well, do you think he's gonna--

Jack starts to walk away

JACK

I have no idea what he's gonna do,
right now I'm just a guy with a
lump the size of a coconut on his
face.

JOSH

Will you--

JACK

I'll let you know when something
happens. Work on your slider, it's
hanging like dry cleaning right
now.

Jack exits the clubhouse as PEDRO RAMIREZ, early twenties,
enters. He carries a large bag and a naive look about him.
He stares around the clubhouse. Nobody seems to notice him,
except for Clyde, who comes over from the corner.

CLYDE

Hey pal, this area's restricted.
Players and staff only. You'll have
to clear out.

(CONTINUED)

Pedro just stares, quizzical.

CLYDE (cont'd)
Come on now, son, you've got to
clear out of here. Are you deaf?

Pedro hands him a piece of paper, Clyde takes a look. He reads it, nods.

CLYDE (cont'd)
Do you speak English? English?

Pedro shakes his head and--

CUT TO:

INT. JACK'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

The front office of the Jethawks, above the upper deck of Jethawk stadium. The crowds are long gone.

Jack sits behind his desk. Behind him stands SCOTT STANLEY, 30s, yuppie & uptight Jethawks Public Relations Director. Jeremy Jethawk (played by teenager DYLAN, still in headless costume), TERRY, and MANNY sit on the other end of the office.

JACK has a swollen black eye and seethes. Except for Scott, the others have suffered similar wounds. On a small TV, they watch a tape of the brawl.

Silence.

JACK
Well. First of all, I imagine the
Woodley Bugle-Telegram will be
leading tomorrow's edition with a
photo of a pregnant woman carrying
a sobbing five-year-old boy out of
Jethawk stadium because he saw
Jeremy Jethawk for the high school
dropout he really is, so thank
you--

TERRY
Jack--

JACK
Terry? You wish to speak?

(CONTINUED)

TERRY

As the General Manager, I feel as though I should be running this meeting--

JACK

Since I imagine the ownership will be calling any minute to fire your ass, Terry, I figured I might as well get a head start as interim GM right now.

(beat.)

Anyways, second of all, thank you to Manny, who unilaterally decided to go ballistic and start this whole thing and get the game called in the 3rd inning, so we had to give everyone in the stands a full refund. Thank you, Manny.

MANNY

Look, Jack--

JACK

It would have killed you to wait one inning? One inning, Manny?

MANNY

I didn't start it.

JACK

Who did then? What happened.

MANNY

Bang-bang play at first on a grounder by Alvarez. First base ump called him out when he was CLEARLY SAFE--

JACK

And--

MANNY

And, the first base ump didn't have a good angle on it, but the plate ump refused to overrule.

SCOTT

(OS)

So you went out and started jawing.

Jack turns abruptly.

(CONTINUED)

JACK
God, Scott, when did you get there?

SCOTT
Hi.

MANNY
(pointing at Dylan in full
bird costume)
And then this MORON came out of the
stands--

JACK
Why'd you come on the field, Dylan.
Dylan appears shell-shocked. He says nothing.

JACK (cont'd)
Dylan.

DYLAN
I'm still in character. I don't
know this "Dylan" of which you
speak.

JACK
(eye-rolling)
Jeremy Jethawk, please tell us in
your own words what happened.

Dylan opens his mouth as if to speak, but can't form the
words. He's too traumatized.

DYLAN
I...I can't...

JACK
Terry? Why did you feel compelled
to intervene?

TERRY
Dylan--

DYLAN
Jeremy! Or Mr. Jethawk!

TERRY
...Jeremy went up to the two of
them and started messing around,
smacking them on the butt and--

(CONTINUED)

DYLAN

(through near-tears)

*The sworn mission of Jeremy Jethawk
is to bring joy and laughter to
children and baseball fans of all
ages!*

MANNY

You pulled down my pants, you
jackass!

DYLAN runs out of the office in tears. There's a beat of
strangeness.

TERRY

Once Manny clocked him, I went down
there and...we got into it. I was
defusing the situation.

SCOTT

From the tape it appears that you
commenced "defusing" the plate ump
repeatedly in the face.

JACK

Really Scott, do you have to just
lurk behind me like that?

(beat.)

Either way, the press is waiting
downstairs, we need a plan of
action.

The OFFICE DOOR OPENS.

JACK (cont'd)

Dylan, really, just go home, nobody
cares--

SUZANNE

No, it's me Jack.

SUZANNE, the club secretary. A middle-aged woman.

JACK

He's on the line?

SUZANNE

2.

JACK

Thanks.

(presses a button on his
phone, activates the speaker)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JACK (cont'd)
Hi Dad.

DAD
(VO)
Jack, how are you.

JACK
I'm--

DAD
Great, that's great. Terry there?

JACK
Yeah.

DAD
And Manny?

JACK
Yeah.

DAD
Terry? Manny?

TERRY/MANNY
Yeah?

DAD
You're fired. Get the hell out.
Jack? You're the new GM.

JACK
Interim.

DAD
No, permanent.

JACK
What? Wait--

DAD
Gotta run. Good talking to you,
kid.

JACK
Wait, DAD, NO--

Nothing but a dial tone.

CUT TO:

INT. STADIUM CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

Scott and Jack walk down the gray, lifeless hallway deep underneath the stadium.

JACK

This sucks. This really sucks, to like an unbelievably...sucky degree, and I'll tell you what else--

SCOTT

It sucks?

JACK

Exactly. You know what this means? Now I have responsibilities. Now I'm accountable. There's no other place to stop the buck because I suppose now the buck stops at my small and insignificant artificial wooden desk. Damn it. He always does that.

SCOTT

Y'know, for someone who just got a promotion I think this is incredibly normal behavior.

JACK

It's not a promotion, Scott. This is my father messing with me. He's giving me this job under impossible circumstances and when I inevitably screw it up he'll give team to Benny and give me a "Well, I gave you a chance, son--" and you know what? We're not getting into this right now.

SCOTT

Just to clarify, when you say "the team," you don't mean--

JACK

This bumfuzzled addle-minded excuse for a professional sports club, no.

SCOTT

You mean--

(CONTINUED)

JACK

Our parent organization, yes.

Scott stops walking. Jack does the same.

SCOTT

The major league team.

JACK

Yes.

SCOTT

Okay. Well, that is bizarre on so many levels.

JACK

What do you mean?

SCOTT

Well, I worry about asking my dad for fifty bucks to pay my cable bill and you're worried about a Machiavellian power struggle between--

JACK

All I'm getting from this is that my life is vastly more interesting than yours.

SCOTT

It's possible.

JACK

'Kay. Where are we doing this press thing.

SCOTT

In the press room.

JACK

We have a press room?

SCOTT

Yes.

JACK

Seriously, we have a press room? Where have I been?

SCOTT

That's a big question to take on in the time we have now--

(CONTINUED)

JACK
Where is it?

SCOTT
Right here.

JACK
This door?

SCOTT
Yeah. Why did you think I stopped walking?

JACK
I don't know, I thought we were having a...moment or something.
(beat.)
I read that wrong?

SCOTT
Pretty spectacularly, yeah.

JACK
So before I go in there, are you going to brief me or something?

SCOTT
No.

JACK
Really? Just go in there cold?

SCOTT
I'm not worried about it.

JACK
Not worried I'll suddenly embark on a tirade of racial slurs?

SCOTT
I'll take my chances.

Scott throws open the door.

CUT TO:

INT. PRESS ROOM -- NIGHT

Three middle-aged balding, obese men are sitting on folding chairs, facing a cheap podium. One of the men dozes. The rest of the seats are empty.

(CONTINUED)

JACK
All right.

SCOTT
Not exactly *Crossfire* or anything.

Jack strides to the podium and--

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. PRESS ROOM -- SCENE

JACK
Good evening. Thank you all for
coming here so late.

The dozing reporter STIRS and suddenly SNAPS AWAKE, coughing
and snorting.

JACK (cont'd)
As you probably know by now, there
was a serious on-field incident at
the game tonight that resulted in
the game's postponement. Acting
swiftly, our parent organization
has decided to part ways with both
General Manager Terence O'Dwyer and
Field Manager Manny Martino. I
think speak for everyone in the
Jethawk organization when I say I'm
grateful for their service and wish
them the very best for the future.
For the time being, our pitching
coach Bob Masterson will take over
as interim field manager while we
conduct a search for a permanent
replacement, starting with our game
tomorrow.

(beat.)
The parent club has named me
replace Terence as General Manager
of the Jethawks. Though the chance
comes in unfortunate circumstances,
running this team has been a dream
of mine and I'm very excited to get
started. Thank you.

(CONTINUED)

Scott steps forward.

SCOTT
At this time, Jack would be happy
to answer your questions.

JACK
I would?

SCOTT
Yeah. Questions? Anyone?

There are definitely not any questions from this bunch.

SCOTT (cont'd)
Is that uh...a hand in the back
there I see?

No, it isn't.

SCOTT (cont'd)
No?

No.

CUT TO:

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE -- LATER

Scott and Jack meet with BOB MASTERSON, the aging and graying Jethawks pitching coach. He's still in uniform, nursing a beer.

BOB
I suppose that's no problem for me,
I had the helm a couple times while
Tommy Marks had cancer in Toledo.

JACK
We really appreciate the assist,
Bob, I hope you know that.

SCOTT
Yes, me as well.

BOB
(re: Scott)
Who is this?

JACK
This is Scott.

(CONTINUED)

SCOTT

I'm Scott.

BOB

You don't say.

JACK

He's our director of public relations.

BOB

Well, we certainly gave you a fun day at the office, didn't we.

JACK

Unfortunately, there's not really room in the budget now for any kind of raise--

BOB

I'm not worried about that right now.

JACK

I appreciate your--

BOB

Right now we have a different problem.

SCOTT

What?

JACK

What?

BOB

Are you guys a vaudeville team or something?

Bob goes to the door and opens it a crack. They peer out at Pedro who's sitting on a bench, still holding his paper and his bag.

BOB (cont'd)

That's Pedro Ramirez.

JACK

Who's that.

BOB

You're off to a great start as GM. Assigned here from the big club,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BOB (cont'd)
they got him from the development
program in the Dominican.

JACK
He just got here today?

BOB
Visa issues, I think. Doesn't speak
a lick of English. Or is just
pretending he can't to mess with
people, I suppose. Wish I could do
that most of the time. Anyway, he
doesn't have a place to stay for
the night, so I figured he can bunk
up with me and the wife tonight.

JACK
You're a mensch, Bob.

BOB
I'm quite something, aren't I.

JACK
You'll see about a host family in
the morning?

BOB
You bet.

JACK
All right. I'm getting out of here.

SCOTT
I might stay a bit, work on some
releases for tomorrow.

BOB
Well hey, you know, Mr. Public
Relations, maybe all this
donnybrook will be a big hit with
the fans. Sellout crowd tomorrow, I
can feel it.

Scott smiles and--

CUT TO:

EXT. JETHAWK STADIUM -- NIGHT

The scoreboard reads WOODLEY VALLEY: 0 VISITORS: 14. It's the last of the ninth and the opposing pitcher winds up and delivers.

UMPIRE
STRIKE THREE!

The bat doesn't even come off the shoulder as a dejected Woodley Valley hitter shuffles back to the dugout under a chorus of boos. "Chorus" might be too strong, as we see there are maybe twenty spectators in the stands.

Jack watches in disgust as the small band of fans quickly streams for the exits and--

CUT TO:

EXT. JETHAWK STADIUM -- DAY

The next morning.

Jack and Scott are walking on the field, up towards the seats to the Jethawks front office entrance.

JACK
Nobody cares.

SCOTT
Did that one really shock you? It's minor league baseball. Obviously Terry and Manny had to be fired to avoid financial sanctions from the league office, but in terms of real damage control all we're looking at a funny clip on Youtube and that's all.

JACK
I just can't believe it. I'm not used to being so blatantly ignored in that way.

SCOTT
Well, let me just add my sympathies for your terrible plight.

JACK
We're completely and totally irrelevant.

(CONTINUED)

SCOTT

I wouldn't say "completely and totally."

JACK

What's attendance been at this year?

SCOTT

About 800 fans a night.

JACK

For a 4,000-seat stadium.

SCOTT

We're not gonna break any records this year, spoiler alert.

JACK

It was pretty crowded the night of the...incident.

SCOTT

The..."incident" also occurred on dollar dog-and-beer night.

JACK

Oh.

SCOTT

Yeah. We took a fifty grand bath on that one.

JACK

With the crowd all lubed up I guess it's a miracle we didn't have a riot.

SCOTT

See, that's the glass-half-full spirit we need.

JACK

This franchise is a humiliation. An embarrassment.

SCOTT

Or that. We can be like that.

JACK

I'm just saying, it feels like I've been put at the helm of a sinking ship.

(CONTINUED)

(beat.)

If my father is ever going to consider giving me the big-league team, I've got to turn this hellhole around.

SCOTT

Yes! Excellent! There we go.

(beat.)

How.

JACK

We have to make a splash. The game last night is going to be made up later in the season, right?

SCOTT

Yeah.

JACK

So when's the next one.

SCOTT

Night after tomorrow. Monday. Here against Royston Ragin' Reindeer.

JACK

All right. And when was our next giveaway scheduled.

SCOTT

May the 5th.

JACK

Well, now it's going to be April 23rd.

SCOTT

Monday.

JACK

Yeah.

SCOTT

But the next one is May the 5th.

JACK

So, move it up.

SCOTT

But it's May 5th, it's a Cinco de Mayo giveaway.

(CONTINUED)

JACK
What are we giving away?

SCOTT
Um.
(Checking notes)
Giant novelty Jethawk sombreros.

JACK
(beat.)
Right.
(beat.)
Well, put out a press release,
tomorrow's game is going to be
Mexican Night with free sombreros
and ponchos or whatever.

SCOTT
Can we call it "Mexican Night?" Is
that a PC term?

JACK
You know what else? We need
dancers.

SCOTT
Excuse me?

JACK
Dancing girls. On the top of the
dugout. Pretty girls to throw stuff
to the crowd, they can be
cheerleaders or something. The
Jethawk Girls.

SCOTT
At a baseball game?

JACK
It's not just baseball now, Scott.
We're in show business. We're
producers. You can handle that,
right?

SCOTT
Being a producer?

JACK
Hiring some dancers. Put a call
out.

(CONTINUED)

SCOTT
Here's the thing.

JACK
I don't care.

SCOTT
I'm not great with women.

JACK
Imagine my surprise, still don't care. Many men would love to be in the position you're in now.

SCOTT
I might break out in hives.

JACK
'Kay. Also, we need to hire a new manager.

SCOTT
Already?

JACK
We need to make a splash. Somebody big. A big name.

SCOTT
Who are you thinking of as a big name who would agree to manage a Single-A baseball team?

Jack pushes the door open to the front office and we--

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE LOBBY -- CONTINUOUS

They walk into the lobby, where Suzanne is at her desk.

JACK
I don't know, what about Paul McCartney?
(to Suzanne)
Good morning Suzanne.

SUZANNE
Good morning, Jack.

(CONTINUED)

SCOTT

Good morning Suzanne. Does he know how to manage a baseball team?

JACK

Suzanne, do you think Paul McCartney would make a good manager for the Woodley Valley Jethawks?

SUZANNE

Whatever you think is best, Jack.

JACK

Scott, Suzanne thinks Sir Paul is a great pick.

SCOTT

Are we gonna talk about this or are you gonna make your stupid jokes?

JACK

I can't do both?

SCOTT

We can make some calls, get a list of serious candidates--

JACK

Hang on. Who is that?

Jack is pointing at a framed copy of an old *Bugle-Telegram*. The headline reads "LOCAL BOY MAKES MAJOR LEAGUE DEBUT." There's a shot below the headline of a pitcher in the midst of his windup.

SUZANNE

Oh, that's *Bruce McKittrick*.

JACK

'Kay. Who is that.

SCOTT

Honestly, do you ever pay attention to anything in this town?

JACK

Absolutely not. Who is that.

SUZANNE

He's a local hero. The first Woodley Valley citizen to play in a major league game.

(CONTINUED)

JACK

A pitcher. Did he do well?

SCOTT

Well, his nickname was "Taters" McKittrick. He came in for one inning of relief against the Yankees, hit four batters and gave up seven runs.

JACK

So no.

SCOTT

That was his brush with the big leagues. Never got higher than single-A after that.

SUZANNE

But people love him here. He used to do christenings, mall openings, fund-raisers.

SCOTT

A veritable legend.

JACK

He lives here now?

SCOTT

Yes. But you should know--

JACK

Great. Suzanne, we've found our new manager and we didn't even have to resort to Ringo Starr. I'm going to see him now.

SCOTT

Jack--

JACK

Suzanne, text me his address. Scott, send out that release about Mexican Night. I'm coming back with a new manager. And...break!

SCOTT

But Jack, he's not--

But Jack is already out the door.

(CONTINUED)

SCOTT (cont'd)
I should've told him.

SUZANNE
Eh, let him find out on his own.
More interesting that way.

SCOTT
Yeah.
(beat)
Can you place a call to the foam
sombrero people? And...we need to
get some girls.
Some...dancing...girls.

Suzanne gives him a judgmental glance and--

CUT TO:

EXT. MATTHEWS HOME -- DAY

Bob Masterson RAPS on the door of a modest suburban home.
Pedro stands behind him, not saying much of anything.

A kindly old man with twinkly eyes, ROBIN MATTHEWS, answers
the door.

ROBIN
Bob!

BOB
It's good to see you, Robin. Got a
new friend here.

ROBIN
Yes, of course. Please come in.
(to Pedro)
It's nice to meet you.

Pedro half-smiles and steps into the house behind Bob--

CUT TO:

INT. FOYER -- CONTINUOUS

Bob, Robin, and Pedro stand in awkward silence for a moment,
before Bob leaps in.

BOB
Robin, Pedro Ramirez, second
baseman and proud
Dominican...Republican?

(CONTINUED)

ROBIN

Welcome, I'm Robin. Have you been
to the US--

BOB

He doesn't ah...He can't speak
English, Rob.

ROBIN

Oh. No interpreter?

BOB

Not on this level.

ROBIN

My.

BOB

I know. Kind of cruel. I appreciate
you doing this.

ROBIN

Oh well, Cindy and I used to love
hosting a player or two every
season but after she passed--

BOB

I know. It's nice of you.

ROBIN

Of course. It'll be nice having
someone else around the house.

(beat)

Well, let's get him situated, shall
we?

They leave the room and--

CUT TO:

EXT. MCKITTRICK'S HOUSE -- DAY

Jack is looking at a pretty run-down ranch house that has
definitely seen better days. The grass has not been cut in
what looks like a century. Paint is peeling off the siding.
Shutters are hanging for dear life by one hinge.

Fenton is undeterred by this, and strides up to the front
screen door. The wooden door behind it is open. He rings the
doorbell. Nothing.

Faintly...SNORING emanates through the screen. Gets louder.

(CONTINUED)

JACK

Hello?

He raps on the screen door.

JACK (cont'd)

Mr. McKittrick?

CUT TO:

INT. MCKITTRICK'S HOUSE -- DAY

Opens the door, steps into the foyer. Peeks into an entryway.

JACK

Taters? Oh Jesus.

BRUCE MCKITTRICK, 50s, overweight, looking like one of those ex-high school athletes you'd see hanging around the Elks Club, slumbers on his couch. He cradles an empty bottle of Jack Daniel's like a newborn. His gut hangs out of an open flannel buttondown and sags over a pair of gym shorts.

The awful smell of the cluttered living room hits Jack, and he reacts accordingly.

JACK (cont'd)

Okay. Bruce?

McKittrick lets out a particularly loud snore.

Jack reaches out slowly, gingerly, and taps a bare foot hanging off of the couch. McKittrick SPRINGS TO LIFE screaming and swearing, Jack backs away and barely ducks a whiskey bottle whizzing by his head. It shatters on the wall behind me.

JACK (cont'd)

BRUCE! BRUCE! It's okay! It's all right!

MCKITTRICK

Who the hell are you?!

JACK

My name's Jack Fenton, I'm the new General Manager of the Jethawks.

MCKITTRICK

No.

(CONTINUED)

JACK

I assure you that I am, I just got the job yesterday.

MCKITTRICK

No. I don't do appearances. Get out. Don't eve come in here again.

JACK

I'm not asking you to do an appearance.

MCKITTRICK

I'm done doing used car commercials, I don't do autographs, kid's birthday parties, honestly I don't understand what it is you people want from me--

JACK

I want you to manage, Taters.

McKittrick takes this in a little.

MCKITTRICK

You know I always thought it was funny. Why the hell did people give me that nickname?

JACK

So is that a yes--

MCKITTRICK

A "tater" is a home run. I'm a pitcher. That's like nicknaming a hitter "Strikeouts" O'Houlihan.

JACK

I'm sure it was meant to be ironic--

MCKITTRICK

Or a sprinter
"Slow-As-Inevitable-Death" McGee.

JACK

I apologize if I--

MCKITTRICK

You know what baseball did for me? Jack shit, that's what. I gave it almost twenty years of my life before I woke up one day and

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MCKITTRICK (cont'd)
realized "Bruce, you really suck at this game. You're never going to make it. I mean it, you're absolutely terrible." And then I thought I was free, oh yes, but then the bills start coming around so it's fifty bucks for a bar mitzvah here and a hundred bucks for a lemonade stand endorsement there and soon well would you look at that? You've gone nowhere fast.

JACK
Bruce, I think this is an offer--

Smolenski starts shooping Jack out.

MCKITTRICK
Now get the hell out of my house, will you? Before I call the police and press charges for breaking and entering--

JACK
Actually the door was pretty much open, I don't think--

MCKITTRICK
GET OUT!

JACK
If you'll just reconsider--

But another Jack Daniel's bottle SHATTERS on the wall behind him.

JACK (cont'd)
Okay! Okay!

CUT TO:

EXT. MCKITTRICK HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Jack sprints out of the house to his car. McKittrick comes to the screen door.

MCKITTRICK
Don't come back here, you got it! Or else I'll take a baseball bat and shove it down your throat so far you won't EVER need a goddam COLONOSCOPY.

(CONTINUED)

Jack is at his car now.

JACK

That didn't even make sense!

He ducks again as another bottle streaks in and smashes against his car. He notices that some of the neighbors are out watching.

JACK (cont'd)

It's all right, just a family friend. Old army buddy. You know how it is.

KID

(os)

Hi Mr. McKittrick!

Jack turns and sees an 8-year-old boy on a bicycle, stopped on the sidewalk, waving to McKittrick. The older man instantly softens.

MCKITTRICK

How are you, Derek? Great to see you, kid.

DEREK

We playing catch today?

MCKITTRICK

Are you going to school?

DEREK

Yes sir.

MCKITTRICK

Finish all your work and we'll just see about that, all right?

DEREK

Thanks!

MCKITTRICK

And tell you mother I said hello!

The kid pedals away. Jack is momentarily stunned at how personable he can be, before another bottle comes SAILING IN, just missing him and smashing in the street.

MCKITTRICK (cont'd)

What the hell are you looking at, anyway?!

(CONTINUED)

Jack quickly gets in the car and drives off, after one last look at the house.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. JETHAWK INFIELD -- DAY

Scott and Suzanne have set up an audition table in the middle of the infield, and numerous BEAUTIFUL GIRLS in workout clothes are stretching out on the grass, preparing for the audition. Scott and Suzanne watch. Scott looks close to death.

SCOTT

I know you don't approve of this

SUZANNE

I don't.

SCOTT

I'm just following orders.

SUZANNE

Hmm, I feel like I've heard someone else say that before.

SCOTT

Jack is my boss.

SUZANNE

What are you planning to do for this audition?

SCOTT

I hadn't really gotten that far yet.

SUZANNE

I thought you had some kind of dance experience.

SCOTT

I took ballet once when I was three.

(CONTINUED)

SUZANNE

Okay. Well, best do something.

Scott takes a deep breath and sighs.

SCOTT

Good morning, everyone! My name is...my name is, ah...

JACK

(os)

Hey, Scott!

SCOTT

Oh thank God.

Jack is striding across the grass towards them, looking plenty steamed.

SCOTT (cont'd)

How are you, Jack?

JACK

Fine. Are these the girls?

SUZANNE

No, they're grapefruits.

JACK

Have you picked any yet?

SCOTT

No, we were just about to start auditions.

Jack begins pointing at various girls.

JACK

You, you, you, you, you, you, and you. Congratulations, you're the new Jethawk Girls.

SCOTT

I was kind of partial to Jethawkettes.

JACK

Jethawkettes, fine, whatever.

He stumps away towards the front offices and Suzanne and Scott look at each other and--

CUT TO:

JACK'S OFFICE -- DAY

Jack walks in and sits down at his desk. It dawns on him that this is the first time sitting in the chair as the official GM of the team. He spins around a little bit, examining in some of the picture frames on the walls.

In one corner there's a JETHAWK WALL OF DISTINCTION, a frame containing a photo of every Jethawk who's made it to the major leagues. Jack stands up and looks at it. He finds McKittrick's picture and stares at the young, optimistic face for a moment. There's a lot that face doesn't know yet. He's a far cry from the slovenly mess Jack saw earlier.

He walks around the walls some more, looking at newspaper headlines from years past. "HIGH HOPES ON OPENING DAY" "JETHAWKS SOAR INTO FIRST PLACE" "ALL SMILES IN WOODLEY VALLEY WALKOFF WIN." Jack studies all these, exhales, and sits on the corner of his desk.

SCOTT

(OS)

I take it you met Taters.

Jack turns to find Scott standing in the doorway.

JACK

I did.

SCOTT

How was it.

JACK

Well. It was an experience.

SCOTT

Yeah, I kind of left out the part about how he's a broken-down fat drunk now.

JACK

Yeah that would've been a good thing to touch on.

SCOTT

Shall I have Suzanne get Sir Paul's people on the phone?

Jack smiles a little at this. He looks at the frames on the wall some more. He walks over and takes one in his hands.

(CONTINUED)

JACK
No. Not just yet.

INT. PEDRO'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Twilight is settling on Woodley Valley as Pedro is settling in, unpacking some things. The room is blank and pretty sterile--cream walls with one lone painting of a landscape that was probably purchased at sears. He sits on the bed and looks around.

After a moment, he takes out his glove and some clothes and sets them on a bed. At the bottom of his duffel bag he pulls out a battered picture frame and looks at it. Inside is a photo of his family, grinning at a local barbeque in his homeland. Pedro sets it on the nightstand, and then looks back at the wall for a minute before--

CUT TO:

INT. MCKITTRICK HOUSE -- NIGHT

\McKittrick is also looking at pictures--pictures of himself in his prime. He cups a baseball in his hand as he passes from memory to memory.

The phone RINGS. He answers it.

MCKITTRICK
Yeah what.
(beat.)
Listen I told you, I don't want--

His eyes move to the pictures.

MCKITTRICK (cont'd)
All right. When.

He glances at his watch.

MCKITTRICK (cont'd)
When? Yes, I said all right, didn't I? Jesus Christ. When do you want me down there?
(beat.)
Okay.

He hangs up. Off his look to the phone--

CUT TO:

EXT. JETHAWK STADIUM PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

The headlights of McKittrick's old Buick Cutlass pierce the parking lot. He parks in the deserted lot and gets out, looks up at the stadium. It's completely dark.

CUT TO:

EXT. JETHAWK STADIUM -- NIGHT

McKittrick stumbles through the concourse and into the stands, coming to the railing that separates them from the field. He stares out at darkness.

MCKITTRICK

(under his breath)

What the hell--

(yelling)

Hello?

From the dark--

JACK

Clyde!

From far off, a loud WHAM! and suddenly the field is flooded in light. The grass looks impossibly green, the dirt brown and fresh, the foul lines clean, sharp, and white.

JACK stands in the middle of the diamond, between home plate and the mound. Somehow, McKittrick is awestruck by the sight of the field. He opens a nearby gate and steps out onto the turf. He walks towards Jack.

JACK (cont'd)

You know what this is? It's not Yankee Stadium. It's not some old bygone ballpark they've long since torn down, Ebbets Field or Tiger Stadium or Shibe. This isn't what has been or what is. This is the future. The blank page. Where it starts. We're in the delivery room of dreams. From the six-year-old kid sitting in the very last row of the upper deck to the guy on the mound shaking off the sign and waiting for the next. That's what this is about. What's next? I don't know. Neither do you. And despite the fact that your exterior attitude may be as pessimistic and

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JACK (cont'd)
dismissive as a DMV clerk, I know
somewhere down there, you want to
find out. I don't know what I'm
doing here or why I'm in this job,
there's a lot of mitigating factors
that...it doesn't matter. But I do
know they haven't even started
writing the book on me and they
sure as hell haven't finished the
one on you. The people here love
you, Bruce. And they'll love the
team just as much. I know it can
happen. As long as it's still 90
feet to first, 60 feet six inches
to the mound, 3 outs to an inning,
and--

MCKITTRICK
I'll do it.

Jack freezes for a moment. Part of him didn't actually think
this would work.

McKittrick sticks out his hand. Jack shakes it.

MCKITTRICK (cont'd)
We've got a night game tomorrow?

JACK
Yeah. It's a giveaway. Mexican
Night.

MCKITTRICK
That sounds kind of racist.

JACK
It's the word we use for--

MCKITTRICK
Whatever. I'll see you at noon
tomorrow.

He starts walking off.

JACK
Could we get you here earlier for--

MCKITTRICK
(doesn't even turn)
No goddam way.

(CONTINUED)

JACK

Okay.

Jack watches him leave for a moment, then looks into the stands.

Scott is reclining in a box seat a few rows up. He's been watching the whole time. He smiles and throws Jack a casual salute, which Jack reciprocates.

Jack turns around and surveys the field. His new domain.

JACK (cont'd)

(calling out)

All right, thanks Clyde!

WHAM. BLACK.

CUT TO:

EXT. JETHAWK STADIUM -- DAY

It's the day of the Jethawks' triumphant return from their road trip. The stadium, miraculously, is packed! Fans are streaming in wearing their Jethawk sombreros, excited for the game.

CUT TO:

INT. CLUBHOUSE -- DAY

There's definitely a different feel in this clubhouse. The team is energized. A lot of excited chatter.

CUT TO:

INT. UNIFORM ROOM -- DAY

Pedro and BERT, the equipment manager, mid-forties, mustache, are trying to get Pedro a jersey.

BERT

Do you have a number you want?

Pedro shrugs.

BERT (cont'd)

A number. What number would you like. All right, how about size? What size jersey?

(CONTINUED)

The frustration is clearly getting to Pedro, as he doesn't know how to answer the question because he doesn't even know what he's asking in the first place.

BERT (cont'd)

You know what? Here. Just take this one. I'm sure it'll work fine.
Ninety-nine's a great number

Bert hands him a jersey and Pedro takes it. Pedro walks out and into--

CUT TO:

INT. CLUBHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

He walks to his locker while putting on the jersey. It is way, way too small. As he starts to go back, he is stopped because Jack and Bruce enter, and the team applauds.

JACK

I'm proud to announce that my first formal act as general manager has arrived, he is sober, and dare I say he smells delightful.

The team laughs.

JACK (cont'd)

Bruce, we're thrilled to have you aboard, and we're certain you can help us get back to playing Jethawks baseball...whatever that may be.

BRUCE

Thanks Jack. Well, I'm not much for speeches or anything, but I'm Bruce McKittrick and I want to go out and beat those sons of bitches today so why don't we go ahead and do that.

The team CHEERS and continues to get dressed. Jack pats Bruce on the back and heads out to watch the game. Bruce notices Pedro in the corner struggling with his too small uniform. The newly minted manager walks over.

BRUCE

Name's Bruce. Nice to meet you.
Need help with your jersey there?

Pedro looks at him, then finally speaks.

(CONTINUED)

PEDRO

Senor, no habla ingles.

Bruce nods, then suddenly spouts off into Spanish, much to the surprise of Pedro. Pedro, in Spanish, tells him that his uniform is far too small. Bruce smiles.

BRUCE

Bert! You still work here?

Bert pokes his head out of the equipment room.

BERT

Still here.

BRUCE

Get Pedro here a large jersey, please. Number 14.

BERT

You got it, boss.

Bruce turns back to Pedro, smiles again, and winks. He walks into his office, closes the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. JETHAWK STADIUM -- DAY

It couldn't be a more perfect day for baseball. The sun is shining, the grass is green, the stadium is jammed with fans. The new dancing girls are going over swimmingly, tossing t-shirts into the crowd and getting the masses fired up.

The teams line up along the baseline for the national anthem, and we see Bruce feel for the first time in a long while--something like pride as he places his cap over his heart. Pedro, similarly, looks at his surroundings and smiles himself. This feels something like home.

CUT TO:

INT. BOX -- CONTINUOUS

Jack and Scott sit together in the employee box in the upper deck, watching the proceedings, also swelling with pride and inspiration. They look at each other.

(CONTINUED)

SCOTT
Well, I guess this could be worse.

JACK
I guess it could.

They turn back to the ceremonies and--

CUT TO:

EXT. JETHAWK STADIUM -- CONTINUOUS

The anthem has concluded, and the umpire puts on his mask--

UMPIRE
PLAY BALL!

And we're off.

CUT TO:

FROM BLACK:

VERA
(OS)
So what do you do...did you say it
was...Jack?

JACK
(OS)
Jack, yeah.

FADE IN:

INT. MCCLUSKEY'S PUB -- NIGHT

Same situation as the opening. Bar, drink, Jack, new girl.

Jack looks over at her and a slight smirk grows on his face.

JACK
I couldn't even begin to tell you.

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW